



Media release

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Submissions invited to the WA prisons inquiry

The Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) has invited further submissions to its inquiry into improving the efficiency of the Western Australian prison system.

After holding discussions with stakeholders, considering their submissions, visiting prisons and considering alternatives in other countries, the ERA has identified key issues affecting the performance of the prison system and proposed ways to improve WA prisons. It is now seeking feedback from interested stakeholders.

ERA chair Dr Stephen King said the inquiry found that the WA prison system suffered from a number of problems, including insufficient transparency and accountability and a lack of autonomy, incentives and clear objectives.

“The ERA acknowledges the work the Department of Corrective Services is putting into improving the system, however in terms of planning and resource allocation, it is clear the prison system in Western Australia can and should be improved,” Dr King said.

“In total, the prison system spends more than \$1 million every day on prisoners who have previously served sentences and were not effectively rehabilitated. The cost of the prison system can be significantly reduced by lowering the rate at which prisoners return,” he said.

“High quality prisons that focus on rehabilitation will clearly be more expensive in the short term, but should provide significant savings to the taxpayer over the long term.

“Issues with governance arrangements appear to be an underlying cause of many of the problems in the prison system. The discussion paper released today proposes an approach to improve the efficiency and performance of the Western Australian prison system.”

Dr King said requiring public prisons in Western Australia to be held to the same standards as private prisons, and requiring public prisons to report their

performance against those standards, are proposals to help ensure the prison system is subject to an appropriate level of transparency and accountability.

He said the ERA would also examine options to improve choices in the delivery of prison services. This may include a mix of public, private and not-for-profit providers.

The purpose of the discussion paper is to provide an additional, early opportunity for interested parties to engage with the inquiry and inform the development of the ERA's draft report.

Further information on the stakeholder consultation process for the discussion paper, including how to make a submission, is available on the ERA website at www.erawa.com.au

The ERA will release a draft report for the inquiry by mid-2015. The final report is due to be delivered to the State Government by 8 October 2015, after which the Government will have 28 days to table the report in Parliament.

Ends

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